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THEODORE ROOSEVELT



A Commemorative Sermon
By the Rev. James S. Stone, D.D.

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The tumult and the shouting dies—

The captains and the kings depart—

Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,

An humble and a contrite heart.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,

Lest we forget, lest we forget!

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT

A Sermon Commemorative

Preached in St. James's Church,
Chicago

On Sunday, January 12, 1919

By the

Rev. James S. Stone, D.D.
Rector

Chicago

DAUGHADAY & COMPANY

1919

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II Samuel III : 38. "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

WE knew that he would die; and yet we never thought of death when we thought of him. He was the embodiment of life: the concentration of its energies: a force guiding, controlling destiny: a master among the masters of men; and when the news came that he was dead it struck us with surprise. For the moment it seemed that in tearing from earth's heart one of its choicest and mightiest souls Death had outdone itself. We were silent: stunned as it were. Theodore Roosevelt was dead!

And he was taken away at this time: when we felt that his country, and verily the world itself, had most need of him. Little did we

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think that his work on earth was done. Little indeed, can we judge of the present or discover indications of the future. The days to come lie before us, and we have to go through them, but thick darkness covers them as black night, and concealed the primeval chaos.

But when we consider the matter more temperately and carefully we are led to ask, of this man, or any other man who has proved himself worthy of life and has been a help to his fellows, is really dead? Does death destroy personality as well as imperil influence? Does that interruption in what we call life actually end life? Is Washington dead, or Lincoln, or any of the men who wrought so wondrous for the country they loved and served? The Christian believes that they with their splendid and helpful gifts have perished.

And when our thoughts turn to the man whom we now commemorate, though we know not in what form or sphere or mode of existence he has entered, and know not how his personality affects this present life, yet we are satisfied that he himself survives, and with him memory and affection, the essential attributes of human nature. "I know there is something

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grand," were the last words of a scholar and statesman some years since, as he lay dying. Into that "something grand" Theodore Roosevelt has entered, and we may be sure that there will be given him scope for the use of the powers which distinguished him here. He lives on!

But though mystery envelops personality, there is no such mystery about influence. Theodore Roosevelt had an influence on the men and affairs of this country which has shaped, and will shape still more, the course of this country's development. Ages after his work is forgotten, and his name has become dim in the past, the effects of that work will still remain in the nature and character, the very fibre, of our national life. And this follows from the surpassing worth of his characteristics, and the force with which those characteristics were displayed and used in his day and generation.

A man such as Theodore Roosevelt could not live and acquire prominence in any age and country without creating diversity of opinion concerning himself. Every man in the land either liked him or disliked him. No

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man who knew him could be indifferent concerning him. And the likes and dislikes were undoubtedly very strong, sometimes vehemently so. They could not have been otherwise. Theodore Roosevelt rarely said a word or did a deed without arousing admiration or denunciation. You agreed with him, or disagreed with him; and you were bound to do one or the other. A strong, direct, incisive, outspoken, fearless character such as his was bound to have that effect.

For years to come there will be division of opinion as to his politics and policies. I do not say diversities of opinion, but divisions, for he was too definite in his utterances and actions to scatter opinions or create varieties of opinions. He cut straight and clean. Men were with him altogether, or they were without him at all. Nor do I suppose that he was otherwise than he expected. He knew that all men could not think alike; and though he had a strong nature and clear vision, such as he had, probably regretted and wondered at in fact, yet his generosity was as great as his convictions, and saved him from intolerance and injustice.

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I may not presume to suggest judgement in matters which are too great for me, but this fact stands out as clear as the sun in a cloudless sky: that in his public life, as well as in his private life, Theodore Roosevelt had neither sympathy nor patience for anything that was not clean, honest, open, and above-board. He denounced wrong-doing in all its forms. Nor did he fear or respect the man, no matter what his wealth or social or political position, who endeavoured to secure his purposes by outwitting his neighbours, by dubious interpretations or guileful twists of facts, by the weaknesses of the community, by the insidious and scarcely perceived corruptions of changing times, or by precedents even though their injurious tendencies had been concealed and fostered by traditions and usages.

I do not say that other presidents had not been equally anxious to carry out like reforms; but many of the evils he combatted were not necessarily evils in the days of his predecessors. They looked all right, and were judged to be all right. But use and new conditions changed their nature. There have been times in the history of both the American and Eng-

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lish peoples when a man was thought no less worthy to sit in legislature because he obtained his seat by bribery, and rarely to bed sober. To-day such practices are utterly and verily reprobated, and would be sufficient to ruin the career of the cleverest man. No one doubts that there were things condoned and deemed not so much as even noticed, in the early days of the Republic which would now receive the most vigorous denunciation. There was an institution yet established by man which had not, entwined even among its good qualities, the tendency to corruption. Even ecclesiastical societies are not exempt from this universal law. The Church herself has had to be reformed, purified, and renovated many times over in its long history; and it cannot be over-stated that in this country, as in all countries, from time to time, financial and commercial corporations, no less than legislative and judicial establishments, need investigation and readjustment. They would not be hurt if they did not. But the necessity of uprightness does not make upheaval attractive to the parties affected. The Church had to be reformed and was reformed; but in the process

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reformation she promptly burned and damned her reformers; and modern corporations surrender to change, and though they cannot excommunicate and consign to torture the advocates of change, nevertheless they do not necessarily love the man who compels the change.

I am not claiming for Theodore Roosevelt a righteousness unknown to other statesmen, but I am affirming that he seized his opportunities, and wrought his changes fearless of consequences and opposition. And thereby, of course, he made enemies. He may have grieved over them, but he did not fear them. The bitterest enemy he ever made never thought for one moment that Theodore Roosevelt was afraid of him or of any other man on earth.

No man in the United States was ever more widely and generally popular than he, and possibly the word "enemy" may be too strong, especially if the epithet be taken to include all that is meant by "enmity." I do not suppose that the most furious adversary of Theodore Roosevelt's plans or reforms ever went so far as to entertain malignant hatred for him personally. His doctrine might be disagreeable

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and inexpedient, but it was at least honest. He had at times to deal with other than gentlemanly foes, but even such men knew that he fought for principle and not for self; and on the other hand, though, from the very intensity and ruggedness of his nature, he might have been what the world calls a "good fellow," he was also a chivalrous and magnanimous one. No man was more ready than he to listen to arguments of worth superior and more conclusive than those on which he had to base his opinions. His desire for information was insatiable. And yet no one imagines that his convictions were ever in a state of flux. They were not reached until he was satisfied to the deepest depths of his heart and the recesses of his mind that they were right. Then they were as adamant. He clung to them as tenaciously as a limpet clings to a rock. Apart from his almost unfailing memory and his skill to grasp, arrange and apply details, his penetrating, courageous dialectic, and his industry that never fagged, he had an infallible intuition, for the right thing and the true thing. This impulse differed not in kind from that which other searchers after

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possess, but its intensity went far beyond that which most men have, even men who claim the genius for statesmanship. And one can say this without claiming infallibility for his decisions or distance for his visions.

Moreover he had the saving and sovereign grace of humour; though not, let us admit, in the measure of an Abraham Lincoln, with whom in so many particulars he may be justly compared. Possibly the gift was too subtle to attract attention, but he had a sufficient perception of human incongruities and inconsistencies to save himself from taking too seriously and too solemnly the whims and fancies, the assumptions, prejudices, and determinations of people who differed from him. The anger of opponents, the twists and turns of adversity, the failure of hopes and efforts, might disappoint, but they did not depress. He could fight, and he could laugh. He could rush to the fray, and he could wait his chance. He could win without boasting; and he could lose without repining. Men might beat him in the race, but they could not keep him down. This mingling of downright common-sense and genial humour served him to the last; and

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though, comparatively speaking, he told stories, yet he enjoyed anecdote, appreciated a happy simile, vivified an archaic and picturesque word, and yielded to the emotions which affect most naturally the human heart. As he journeyed through the country, even on his political tours, in the most exciting of campaigns, speaking in the cities to multitudinous enthusiastic hearers and in the village groups of no less loyal adherents, he never forgot that first of all, and all the time, he was a man dealing with men. He sought to win, but he would win, not by drawing out the evil that lurks in the crowd, but by animating it to good—by stirring up and inflaming passions, indeed, never for error but always for truth, never for the wrong but always for the right.

But all this is over now. He is no longer in this world's politics. To-day we may believe that though men are still divided over his policies, and will be for some time to come, his foes are one with his friends in doing honour to the man himself. Both friends and foes unite in ignoring party sympathies and animosities, and think above all else of magnificent Americanism.

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For Theodore Roosevelt was the incarnation and interpretation of the ideals and aspirations of this country. I do not say more so than other men, or more exactly than other men; but in so emphatic and definite a manner that the country regards him as illustrative of a type, and as a type, not so much unique or exceptional, as desirable and worthy of emulation. He had the skill to touch and vivify in a remarkable way those traits which you feel almost instinctively are necessary for good citizenship, and especially for leading citizenship. He was able to embody those traits in his own life. He not only professed them, but he lived them. And yet, great as he was, it may be taken for granted, he had not in the same proportion all the traits we admire and wish for. In some qualities, being a man, he may have been deficient; but he certainly had such as strike the imagination, and lie at the foundation of the social fabric.

Not one of these ideals, aspirations, and traits, I repeat, was peculiar to him. Apart from his surprising energy, unwavering determination, dauntless courage, and physical and mental powers, the qualities which lifted

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him far above most men, he was one among his fellows. You admire him much because of his ideals and aspirant traits, as though they were peculiar to him, because they are the same ideals, as the same traits that you yourself possess, or are convinced you ought to possess. He brings out what you are satisfied the perfect man should bring out. He is the pattern which we feel that people of this country should follow, and not only should follow, but which every right-minded citizen tries to follow.

Thus you think of his loyalty not only to America, but also to that indefinable, nevertheless clearly understood, spirit which is known as Americanism. It is not only the country—its mountains and prairies, its rivers and forests, its material resources and natural beauties,—that makes us Americans, but much more a spiritual attribute, a position which we receive partly from our surroundings, and partly from our ancestors, and partly from the soul which enters into the body, and makes it a living thing. I do not know that we can define the term "soul"; nor is it neces-

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we should seek to define the term "Americanism." We are perfectly aware of what both terms mean. And for generations to come, when the instructors of youth shall endeavour to describe the perfect, all-rounded, pure, and unselfish citizen of the Republic, the personification of Americanism,—nay, let me go still farther and say, when they would depict an ideal man,—they will speak in glowing admiration and widening wonder of Theodore Roosevelt.—

"He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."

His strength was used for the support of the weak. His individuality was given unreservedly to the welfare and upbuilding of the community. Personal aggrandisement and advantage were never allowed to separate him from the brotherhood of man. He spared no pains, he hesitated at no sacrifice, he recognized no discouragement, where he could serve the public interests. To him the State came first of all: himself far behind. No man ever charged him with neglect of duty. He would have reproduced in this country the

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condition which Macaulay fondly tells us existed in Rome:—

"Then none was for a party;
Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great."

Theodore Roosevelt, however, was more than a statesman. His gifts were varied and his pursuits many. As a scholar and writer he attained significant rank in the literary world. His interest in scientific and economic questions was keen. He was a born leader of men and won laurels in the army. His love of travel and adventure carried him into the depths of African forests and the wilds of South America; while as a sportsman he stands with ancient heroes among the most famous hunters before the Lord. Whatever he did he did with enthusiasm and thoroughness. He was a remarkable man in every way. His strength of character, that clear thought and positive conviction, were combined with a gentleness and unselfishness, a tender solicitude for others, which made his personal and family life happy and beautiful as

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dise itself. No breath of scandal was ever wafted into the sanctuary of his life; no serpent's trail ever lay across his threshold. Milton portrayed no sweeter, purer home in Eden. There dwelt the loveliest fairies ever vouchsafed mortals: peace, confidence, affection.—Sorrow came; the boy died in France; and tears flowed deep. But the tender, stalwart, great-hearted father would have the loved one sleep the long sleep where he fell, and thanked God that another of his race had struggled and bled for the cause of freedom and right!

“Great men are the guide-posts and landmarks in the State,” says Edmund Burke. They become more, when they are able to win hearts as well as to control minds,—when the attractive traits of human nature appear. Then they not only point the way, but they also lead through the unknown wilds. And in order to lead, they must have the power to inspire confidence and to draw out the devotion of the people they would lead. To gain this confidence and devotion, more is wanted than the ability which would make a name merely monumental. Unless they can awaken imagination and enliven the homelier and

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more common virtues of good fellowship stand simply by the wayside, useful historically, but otherwise dead memorials. With this gift, this living sympathy makes the world akin, men draw near to and love them. Theodore Roosevelt became him as a leader and a man, and without thought of disrespect or advantage out of purest admiration, the people of America spoke of him as "Teddy." They felt they owned him. He was theirs in a way that few public men have ever been. It would not have happened had they not discerned in him more than mere genius; he could not only advise and counsel them but he could also understand their hopes and fears, their troubles and anxieties, their sorrows and their joys. If he despised and denounced the harshness and cruelty of w

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doing, he stood for the toiler who had suffered, and knew him as a brother. So that men saw in him, not the grandeur of a giant, astonishing and repelling, but the majesty of a man, winsome, brotherly, unfailing, and humble. He hated race-suicide, and urged the purity of marriage and the extension of family. His veneration was warm and clear for the dignity of womanhood, the sacredness of child-life, the mystery of old age. No knight of by-gone days set lance in rest more valiantly than he in defence of honour. Nor would fancy wander from truth in picturing him as never happier than when he looked into the glad eyes of friend who loved him for himself alone. It did not need close contact for even the stranger to realize something of this. But they of his inner circle, into which the world might not enter, doubtless could say to us,

“You know him slightly. We, who knew him well,
Saw something in his soul you could not see.”

That Theodore Roosevelt was a Christian goes without saying: a Christian, and not in name only, but in deed and in truth. Baptized into Christ, he worshipped regularly before

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the altar of Christ. Notwithstanding his life, his intellectual activities, his social life, he found time for his public devotions. He was not above religion. Like Foch and Pershing, and many another mighty man on whose skill and courage the salvation of the peoples has depended, he humbled his heart and bent his knee. God still spoke to him, and he knew that his strength lay in his fellowship with God. But for God he had made himself what he is to-day: a standard for men to look to,—not only a citizen of the world, but also a practical, earnest, devoted follower of Jesus Christ. You may form an idea of the character of his religious life by recalling his favourite hymn, "How firm a foundation." The lines in that hymn, which were read at his funeral, have no uncertain sound. They suggest no feeble, sentimental aspirations, no languishing wish which a weak world might indulge in under a temporary emotion, but they express a vigorous, strengthening assurance in the never-failing power of God in His unwavering adherence to His promise. We do not doubt that this strong spirit was in the man who had swayed the minds and hearts

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multitudes, who had stood alone as a ruler of a mighty nation and as a wanderer in silent wildernesses, majestic and masterful wherever he was, yet, in the simplicity of his soul and the earnestness of his faith, had found his way to God, and now abides in the rest of heaven.

"Put out the light, please."—His last words: not knowing that for himself earth's lights would never more be needed. A few minutes in the dark; and then the dawn of endless day!

On the most beautiful of all beautiful days, the Feast of the Epiphany, he went to the land where the light is eternal, and this past week his body was laid in the quiet, country churchyard, with simple rites and by solitary priest, followed to the grave by his sons and daughters and neighbours. There was neither the pomp of ceremony nor the peal of organ or roll of drum. The Church refrained from splendour; the State kept silence. No guard of honour; no vested prelates; no tolling bell. A man, a father, a friend was buried. That was all! All save this: the love of the folk he had lived with—the love of a nation that he had loved! That was as the warm sunshine

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of a summer day, precious as the smile of

Thus he was gathered to his fathers. I
ine if you will, that which scarcely painted
depict and only poet can describe, either
sublimity and grandeur of Theodore R
velt when he said "Quentin shall sta
France," or the sublimity and grandeur o
scene in which, under the wintry sky, am
stillness of the winds of heaven and the
less trees and the affections of men, one o
greatest geniuses of this generation was
ried to his grave!

The words of Tennyson concerning
Duke of Wellington are no less applicab
Theodore Roosevelt,—a worthy comra
Valhalla of the man to whom England
her highest honours:—

"His voice is silent in your council-hall
For ever; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent; even if they broke
In thunder, silent; yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the Man who spo
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;

* * * * *

—his work is done,
But while the races of mankind endure,

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Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land,
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure :
Till in all lands and thro' all human story
The path of duty be the way to glory."



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